



News at 12

Highway District 12 Kentucky Transportation Cabinet

Serving Floyd, Johnson, Knott, Lawrence, Letcher, Martin & Pike Counties

Kevin Damron, PE, Chief District Engineer • March 2009 • Volume 9, Number 2 • Sara George, Editor

We kick ice!

Clearing a path through snow-covered roads is routine work for the crews at District 12. Tackling the aftermath of a devastating ice storm — followed by days of ferocious high winds — is way beyond normal.

The key to our success in getting roads reopened in record time, without any serious injuries or accidents, is a testament to the training and expertise of each crew member, said Darold Slone, PE, Project Delivery and Preservation Branch I.

“In addition,” Darold said, “we got much-needed help from volunteer firefighters, individuals willing to take risks, and National Guardsmen crews.

“Perhaps the best part of dealing with these winter storms was the show of support for the four hardest-hit counties (Lawrence, Johnson, Martin, and northern Floyd) by the crews in those counties which were only marginally affected by these three storm systems (Knott, Pike, and Letcher).”

Sam Hale, PE, Slone’s counterpart in the district’s southern counties, observed that this was the first extreme weather situation since the

— see *Storm Stories*, page three



TRANSPORTATION WORD SEARCH

There are 50 transportation-related words in the puzzle below. The first person to turn in to Sara George the most words found will win a \$10 gift card good at any Double Quik or at the Pine Mountain Grill. Scan and email to sara.george@ky.gov or send it to Sara's office at the D.O.

W	I	N	S	L	A	E	Y	A	W	S	D	N	B	E	S	C	E
S	J	O	G	G	I	N	G	A	R	E	O	U	L	K	A	E	G
G	S	O	A	E	E	A	E	O	W	I	S	C	A	R	T	P	E
O	E	W	H	E	E	L	S	S	T	E	Y	T	E	F	A	S	N
S	A	O	A	N	O	P	I	A	N	C	E	A	A	M	U	R	R
I	U	R	R	P	O	R	N	B	R	B	P	R	E	R	I	E	U
D	R	I	V	E	M	I	S	O	O	A	E	A	F	T	R	T	N
G	I	L	O	U	T	A	T	A	L	M	P	B	S	A	U	P	D
E	G	N	I	S	S	O	R	C	L	O	O	H	C	S	N	O	E
G	H	U	E	S	M	D	O	E	E	A	H	T	R	O	N	C	R
T	T	D	N	S	T	R	L	C	R	S	Y	S	U	O	I	I	P
S	O	U	T	H	N	R	L	D	S	E	R	A	T	A	N	L	A
I	F	R	E	E	A	R	E	I	K	S	T	E	J	E	G	E	S
O	W	N	R	O	V	E	R	E	A	O	N	L	T	N	E	H	S
Y	A	W	H	G	I	H	O	T	T	T	T	I	A	N	R	T	I
L	Y	A	W	E	N	O	A	R	E	T	E	M	O	L	I	K	G
T	R	U	C	K	I	N	W	R	S	T	F	W	B	X	D	E	N
V	I	C	O	M	M	U	T	E	M	D	W	C	E	D	I	N	S

***The next time you start
to say something negative
about a co-worker,
pretend he (or she) is
standing behind you.***

🎵 🍏 LIFE NOTES 🍏 🎵

🎵 🎵 GLAD NOTES 🎵 🎵

Erin Lindsay Justice made her debut into the world on Thursday, March 5, at about 6 o'clock in the evening. Brother Trey poses with his new sister and mother **Mandy Collins-Justice**, Traffic Section Supervisor. Born at Pikeville Medical Center, Erin weighed 6 pounds and was 19 inches long. Her father, Crit Justice, took the photo.



Folks from Frankfort conducted a Structures class earlier this month at Jenny Wiley. At least five districts sent people and some consultants attended as well. People came from as far away as District 1 (Paducah). Among the six people who scored 100% on the test given at the end of the class were D-12's **Doug Wright** and **Matt Moore**. Good job, guys! Everyone who took the class received certification in Structures as well as training credit.

Teresa Tackett was sitting down beside hubby **Greg Tackett** when a photographer snapped the shot below at the Boys' Sweet Sixteen tournament in Lexington. The picture appeared on the front page of the *Lexington Herald-Leader*, with a story about the teams and fans from small schools whose basketball teams made it to Rupp this year. Greg looks appropriately disappointed; his Shelby Valley Wildcats were being defeated by Elliott County.

SMALL SCHOOLS, FANS HAVE BIG DAY



Buy photo reprints at Kentucky.com

PABLO ALCALA | palcala@herald-leader.com

Pike County's Tiffany Blackburn cheered for Elliott County — to the chagrin of her husband, Shannon, a fan of Shelby Valley — as the two schools met in a Sweet 16 game in Rupp Arena on Friday. Game coverage on Page B1.

'YOU DON'T SEE A LOT OF TEAMS FROM EASTERN KENTUCKY MAKE IT DOWN HERE'

By Dori Hjalmarson
dghjalmarson@herald-leader.com

Friday night in Rupp Arena was small-school heaven.

Small-school heavyweights Shelby Valley and Elliott County battled each other, and all anyone wished was that these two mountain schools could have been matched up later in the National City Boys'

Sweet Sixteen.

"This year is the year of the small school," said Shannon Blackburn, an elementary school assistant principal in Mingo, W.Va. He lives in Pike County, and he was sitting with his wife, Tiffany, in the Shelby Valley fan section. Tiffany Blackburn, from Morehead, was cheering for Elliott County.

There is a bit of intra-county rivalry among the Pike schools, Blackburn said, but in the past few weeks, the county has come together for Shelby Valley.

Elliott County has drawn plenty of attention as one of the smallest of the small schools. Both teams have flirted with the No. 1 rank-

See FANS, A8

A word (or two) from the Chief

On Tuesday and Wednesday of the infamous January '09 Ice Storm, Governor Beshear shut down all state offices. Non-essential, non-emergency state employees were allowed to leave work because of worsening weather conditions. When I saw these orders, my first reaction was to keep all District 12 employees on the job. If I had been given the option of choosing the essential employees required to stay and the non-essential employees required to go home, I know that I would have asked all of our employees to stay on the job serving the good people of this Commonwealth. I believe that *all of our employees are essential*.



We have experienced an amazingly challenging year. We have received great praise from our public, public officials, and the leadership of our Cabinet. I would like to share the following comments that I received from our State Highway Engineer, Mike Hancock. This came late in February following a busy month of ice, snow, and wind events.

Ever wonder what it's like to work with "Real Pros"?

Let me tell you what they look like: They are committed to their profession, they are dedicated to continuous improvement, they inspire those around them, they lead by doing, they perform even when the world says they could choose otherwise, and they give their jobs, their family and their faith their all. In a nutshell, they **CARE**.

Have you ever met any Real Pros? I have! **THEY ARE YOU!**

And I completely agree. I have not only met Real Pros, I am privileged to say that I work with professionals who keep our highways safe and, when challenged, CAN REALLY KICK ICE!

— Kevin

Storm Stories

(continued from page 1)

new Section offices were created by the Cabinet's reorganization, which went into effect last year. "The Project Delivery and Preservation section offices include construction as well as maintenance people. This was the first time that construction folks were expected to work what has been traditionally a maintenance responsibility," Sam pointed out.

Darold said that everyone worked really well together. "In times of stress and crisis, people tend to bond," he said. "Our people are no different. The maintenance men welcomed help from the construction folks, and those in construction, not used to clearing downed trees and such, pitched in and helped without complaint. It was a great example of the kind of teamwork that reorganization was designed to achieve."

Every storm has its share of interesting incidents, the stuff of stories repeated every Snow and Ice season for years to come. The storms of January and February 2009 were no different. Here are just a few:

NOT EVERYONE DRIVES A SNOW PLOW

Shantana Woodward, who joined D-12 permanently this year (she was an intern in Right of Way last year), shares this observation about the "anonymous" men and women who work Snow and Ice.

My Dad, Vernon "Red" Damron, works in the equipment garage (Transportation Auto/Truck Technician II) beside Pikeville High School. The night that it began to snow, I was at my parents' house (we live close to each other), watching out the window, thinking that things were getting bad out-

— see Storm Stories, page 6







Storm Stories

(continued from page 3)

side. I told my Dad that I may have to ride to work with him in the morning because my truck more than likely wouldn't make it off the hill. He said, "Sis, it looks bad, so I will probably have to go out tonight." Within minutes the phone rang and he got the call to leave. I thought about all the other people safe in their houses, warm and cozy, about to lie down for bed, and here my Dad was braving the weather to do his part to keep the roads safe. Even though my Dad and some of the men at the Equipment Garage don't drive snow plows, all of them still work hard to keep those plows working, and I just wanted to thank them as well. I made it to work the next day, and I know that many more people did as well, all because of the hard work that **all** our men did during those cold and snowy nights.

TRAPPED!

The morning after the ice storm hit, Matt Moore, Prestonsburg Section Supervisor, was driving up KY 1100 in Floyd County, monitoring road condi-



VERNON DAMRON

tions. He managed to drive almost to the foot of the hill before he had to stop because the road was blocked by downed trees.

He turned his truck around to start back, and discovered that in the time it took him to stop and reverse directions, two or three trees had fallen across the road not 300 feet from where he sat. He was blocked in. While backing up, he noticed the complete silence. There were no sounds until I heard a big 'woosh.' I was backing up the truck when I looked up and saw utility lines coming down behind me, at the exact spot where I had stopped just seconds before.

"My first inclination was to call the garage," he said, "and get them to come and cut me out. But all circuits were busy on my cell phone. I tried to holler for somebody on the (two-way) radio, but there was so much chatter that no one could hear me. So I went to this lady's house and asked to use her phone and call the (Allen) garage."

No one answered. "It was a helpless feeling. I had no chain saw. I couldn't contact anybody. It was the first time I realized the importance of Reorg. Every person in the Prestonsburg Section Office was out cutting trees."

Matt said there were some local

folks taking kerosene to the house of someone who was too sick to get out. They cut the tree limbs so he could pass under them. "While cutting one that had me blocked, more were falling."

If it hadn't been for the kindness of strangers, Matt says he could have sat on KY 1100 most of the day, waiting for someone to miss him or waiting until the radio talk cleared up enough to reach someone.

SIGNAL CREW RESCUE

The day after the ice storm hit, Thursday, January 29, the signal crew had the most challenging situation in anyone's memory. "There were more signals malfunctioning on US 23 than there were signals that were working," said Keith Coleman, Highway Traffic Technician Superintendent. He was talking about all of US 23, from Lawrence County through Johnson, Floyd, and Pike, to the Virginia state line in Letcher County.



Keith Coleman, right, with Tim McCown, using a generator to get a set of traffic signals working after January's ice storm.

The highway was actually closed at Paintsville, not because signals were out (which they

were), but because downed utility lines were splayed across all four lanes.

Keith and Clinton Springer were at the barricade on the north end of town, explaining to motorists why the road was closed and telling them how to detour through town to get back on US 23. "A woman pulled up and rolled down her window. We could tell immediately that she was pretty upset," Keith said. She had just been notified that her father had passed away, and she had driven quite a distance from out of town to get to her family's home.

"She was so torn up she couldn't remember the directions," Keith said. "She hadn't been home in a while. Where she was going was on the other side of the detour. We weren't sure she could make it through town without getting lost, so I had her follow me."

Keith drove through the detour, the woman following right behind, and kept going until he got her back on US 23 and headed in the direction of her father's house.

ALMOST HISTORY

On January 29, about 10 o'clock in the morning, Johnson County time, ice began collecting on trees. "It was a gradual thing," explained Doug Wright, PE, Paintsville Section Manager. "Trees began bending, then breaking, then coming up from the roots. As more rain fell and more ice

— see Storm Stories, page 7

Storm Stories

(continued from page 6)



B.C. Ward

collected, sturdier trees started falling.” Everyone in the Paintsville Section was out cutting paths for the snowplows to get through. “We had saw trucks in front of salt trucks,” Doug said. He and B.C. Ward, Tech II, had worked on KY 40, 581, 2373, 931, and 201. When darkness fell, so did the temperatures, making the situation more difficult, not to mention more dangerous. “You could hear something fall about every five to ten seconds. Then trees were falling right around you.”

BC had the worst scare. Doug was sawing and BC dragging the limbs off the road. The running saw blocked the sounds of the trees falling. Just as Doug turned off the saw, BC heard a tree coming his way and jumped fast. He missed being hit by about a foot, and would definitely have been hit had the saw been on.

Doug said they sawed their way back to Route 40 (west), right about the Paintsville Lake entrance. “We’d get one cut and another one would fall,” describing the frustration mixed with the danger. They were using the

flashers and headlights of Doug’s truck to see what they were doing. “And sometimes the headlights of other cars that came upon us and couldn’t get through,” he laughed.

The trees were indiscriminate, though. One made a beeline for Doug’s truck and actually busted the windshield.

Once they made it to the garage, they called all the other crews back in. “We ceased work after dark, not just that day but for the duration of the storm. It was just too dangerous.”



Doug Wright’s windshield after being visited by a falling tree on KY 40 W in Johnson County. Just minutes before, another tree nearly took out Paintsville Section Tech II B.C. Ward, who was working with Wright to clear the road.

WHAT A DAY!

Snow hit the northern part of the district on the evening of February 3, covering roads that already had a layer of

ice on them. Keith Hill, Administrative Specialist II in Johnson County, was out in after supper when he thought he heard Jeff Kelly radio for Johnson County maintenance to pick up. “The state radios were extremely jammed from all the emergencies taking place in our district, but I could tell by his voice something was wrong,” Keith said.

He finally got in touch with Jeff using a cell phone. His snow plow had turned over going down the mountain in the Hammond area. He was okay but it was beginning to snow again, it was dark, and his truck wasn’t running. It gets cold very quick in those circumstances.”

Keith was the closest person who could get to him, so he headed across the two-mile mountain on KY 40, a treacherous stretch of road (after all, Jeff’s truck had just turned over in a ditch along the same route). “Driving down the mountain in Hammond was extremely tough. I was sure I could get to him, but I didn’t have much hope of getting out for at least several hours.”

In the meantime, Leon Daniels, Johnson County’s Superintendent II, made it to a little country store at the foot of Spicy Mountain on KY 40, a few miles from Jeff and Keith. He stayed there to make sure, if something went wrong

while they were trying to get out, that he could try to get emergency crews to them.



KEITH HILL

Talking to Jeff on the way back, Keith learned that all his (Jeff’s) roads were clear and black when he started down the mountain in

Hammond, but the storm hit hard and fast.

He had no time or place to pull over and put chains on his truck. He had to try to get to the bottom. He met a vehicle along the way and stopped. The heat from his tires melted the snow down to the ice and when he took off, the truck broke traction and went into a ditch, turning over on its side.



JEFF KELLY



LEON DANIELS

They finally made it to the store where Leon was waiting. By this time it was 9 o’clock at night. Leon said there was a family stranded at the store. They couldn’t get home and had two babies in their car.

Keith called Gary McClure, Johnson County’s Emergency Management director, to see if he had a vehicle suit-

— see *Storm Stories*, page 8

Storm Stories

(continued from page 7)

able to take the family home, only to find out that every emergency responder in the county was already tied up. "The Governor had issued an order that we could use state resources to help anyone in distress, so I called Cathy Dye to make sure I understood the order and she said that's what it meant. I drove back to the store."

Keith said the parents were sitting in the car with two beautiful little girls; one was two years old and the other five months. "I walked over and asked if I could help. The mother was crying because she was afraid they would have to sleep in the car all night and they were low on gas from idling to keep the babies warm. She said she had been praying that the Lord would send help to them. I told her that He must have. I asked her where they lived and she said in Martin County about 15 miles from where we were, so I told them I could take them home or to a shelter, but we had to cross extremely dangerous mountains either way. They decided to try to get home."

"I was driving a full size Dodge 4WD with three adults and two babies in the cab. I quietly prayed to God that he would let me get them home without any problems. There wasn't any room for the babies' car seats. Once we were on our way, the mother said

she didn't think we were allowed to transport people in state vehicles. I told her that under normal conditions we aren't, but that Governor Beshear had sent an email to all of us in Transportation to help anyone we found in distress.

"It was such a good feeling to be able to help without any red tape! It took about 45 minutes to an hour to get them home. Normally it would have been about 15 minutes. We arrived without any trouble whatsoever. I thanked the Lord for answering my prayer to get them home safely. On the way back I slid several times and was completely sideways once. I kind of laughed, thinking I should have asked the Lord to get me back safely! In a few minutes I came upon one of Martin County's snow plows, treating and plowing the road. I followed him across Spicy Mountain into Johnson and finally made it back to the garage. What a night!"

MAKE THAT THING WORK!

When serious cleanup began in Lawrence County, the crew borrowed a rubber tire excavator. Matt Reid noticed right away that the equipment was not working properly. It was slow and "just not right."

Taking the initiative, he took the manual home, read it, and figured out how to fix all the settings properly so we could get maximum efficiency from the debris removal machine.

Matt says it has three gears, trim, first gear, and super low (snail), which is used for picking up debris and moving it to the waiting dump trucks that take it to the waste areas.



MATT REID

It only goes about 25 miles per hour and had 132 miles on it when Matt started figuring out how to operate it. As of Friday, March 27, it had more than 280 hours on the odometer, about 10 machine hours per day of use.

"We had it on almost every secondary road in Lawrence County," he said. "We only have four roads left, US 23, KY 645, 2565, and one other, I can't remember which. This is our sixth or seventh week using it, and I'd say we have four or five weeks left."

Matt would like to see every maintenance facility have one of these excavators. He could definitely train people to operate them. He agreed that it's amazing what happens when a person reads the directions.

WHAT YOU CAN'T SEE COULD KILL YOU

Jeremy Mollette plowed down KY 1100 at East Point, turned around and plowed the other lane. He was on his third pass when things turned ugly.

"On the first two trips, I stayed more in the middle of the road, treating and plowing. The road was completely

snow covered. The third trip I was more or less on the shoulder, trying to get the shoulder plowed and salting at the same time. I had almost a full load of salt.

"I heard a crack and a pop and suddenly a utility pole was sitting in my lap."

He can't remember if his heart stopped or not. "I can't say I was even scared. It happened so fast, I didn't have time to get scared."

He later learned that his plow blade had snagged a telephone company line. "The line wasn't even broken. We had to cut it. The pole hit the truck about six inches above the windshield on the roof. Teddy (Bishop) said if it had been six inches lower it would have hit my head and probably killed me. It tore off half the hood and both outside mirrors, plus it busted the windshield."

For about five minutes Jeremy just sat there, stunned. I tried to get my boss (Brian Hatfield) on the radio. I tried to holler (over the radio) for Johna (Gray)." Finally, he got a signal on his personal cell phone and called the Allen garage. Jim Gullett was the first person to get to him, followed quickly by Brian Hatfield, then Teddy Bishop from the Equipment Garage.

Brian and Teddy scooted the pole off the truck and Jeremy drove it to where Teddy could hook it up to tow it back to the Pikeville garage.

The road is part of Jeremy's normal route. He said he'd never had any trou-

— see *Storm Stories*, page 9

Storm Stories

(continued from page 8)

ble on it before, and thinks the line was probably there the first time he went up but he missed it because he had the truck in the middle of the lane instead of along the shoulder.

It's not the first time he's had a close call. When he worked at a lumber mill, he had a log roll of the forks of the loader he was operating and come through the wind-



shield. "I was under the impression this job would be safer," he laughed. He's been with D-12 going on two years and says he's just glad he can laugh about what happened. "If it had been a power line, it would have been a whole different story. I got out of the truck to run off about five kids who heard the noise and came out to see what happened. If it had been a power line, I probably would have been killed."



Traffic coming from the opposite direction around this curve was in for a surprise. All too common this winter, trees blocking the road made driving hazardous long after the snow and ice were gone.



SNOW STATS

The Cabinet estimates that District 12 was covered with 164,575 cubic yards of storm debris. As of Friday, March 27, 41,144 cubic yards had been removed.

During the Ice Storm (01/27-01/29/2009), District 12 used 2,018 tons of rock salt and 7,926 gallons of liquid calcium chloride. During the Snow Storm (02/02-02/05/09), the district used 3,776 tons of rock salt and 18,059 gallons of calcium chloride.

Winter 2009 Prompts Cabinet Evaluation of Preparedness

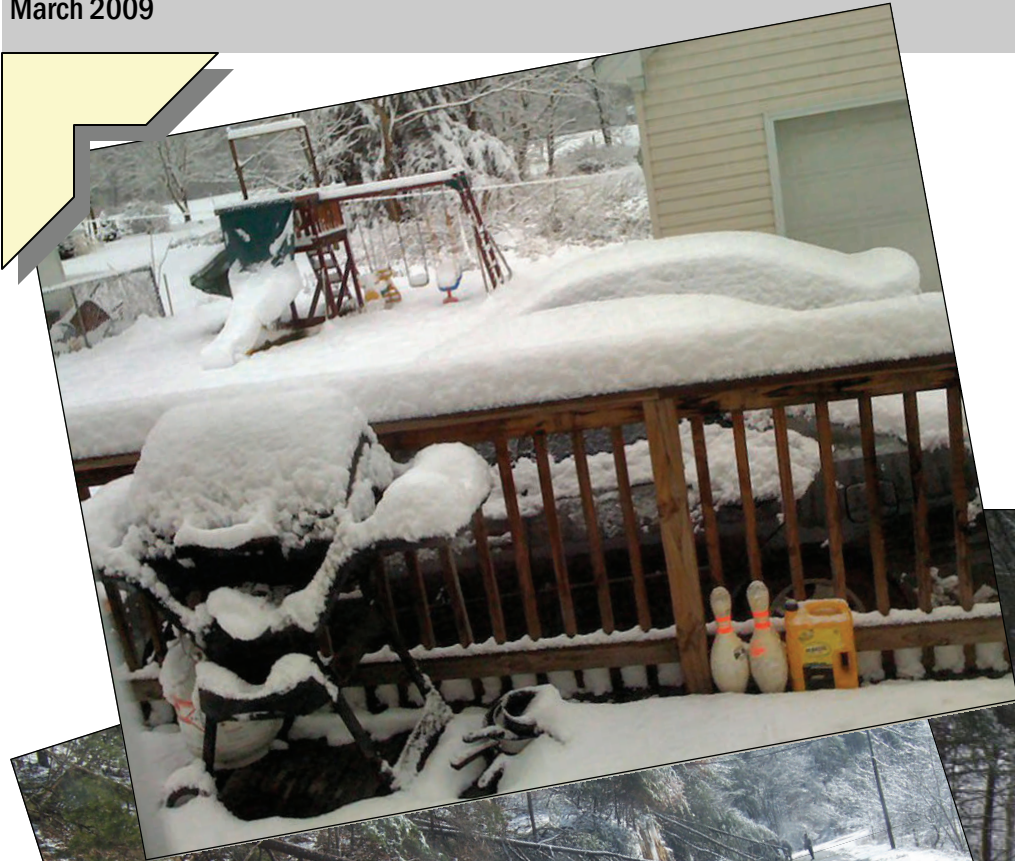
All around the Johnson County Maintenance Facility homes and businesses were without power. No electricity also meant no telephone service to many land lines. "We were extremely fortunate," said Chief Kevin Damron. "Not only did the Johnson County garage have power throughout the entire winter storm cycle, all of our buildings throughout the district had power. Other districts didn't fare so well."

District 2 — Madisonville — had no electricity in the district office. Communication came to a halt between D.O. personnel and workers out in the field. Not only did officials not know what was going on, they didn't know if everyone was okay, didn't know what equipment or supplies they needed, and could only reach them by driving to each site.

To avoid this kind of crisis in the future, each district office throughout the state will be equipped with a generator. Electricity and communications equipment will continue to operate regardless of any utility outages that may occur.

In addition, the KEWS radio tower at Flatwoods will also get a generator so that signals will not be lost during times of power failure.

"This winter we faced some unusual situations," said Damron, "things we hadn't dealt with before. The Cabinet is taking steps to make sure we are better prepared in the future. Even though power failures didn't affect our work stations, it was just this side of miraculous that we continued to have power when no one around us did."



We get thanks for work during winter storms

Chuck Knowles
Kentucky Transportation Cabinet
200 Mero Street
Frankfort, Kentucky 40622

Chuck,

While there is still much to be completed in terms of the Winter Storm clean-up, I wanted to take a moment to compliment you and your fine folks for the tremendous amount of debris removal that has transpired thus far throughout our State Park System. This has, and no doubt will continue to be, a formidable task for still weeks and months to come. Please know how much we sincerely appreciate your team's efforts, especially as we are right around the corner in opening Park camp sites, golf courses, and trails to those guests anxious to get outdoors at our Parks. Sometimes we are in such a hurry to get things done, we forget to stop and give credit for the many good things that are happening . . . On behalf of "State Parks" we really appreciate the help!

Commissioner Gerry van der Meer

**No man ever listened
himself out of a job.
— Calvin Coolidge**

February 6, 2009
To all the state road employees:

During the past two weeks, Kentuckians have been dealing with a historic winter storm that left more people across the state without power than ever before. The ice and cold, along with the downed trees and limbs, caused hazardous roads in most communities, including the counties of District 12. However, I want to go on record as saying that in the face of such dire circumstances, the state road department performed remarkably.

Thank you for doing such an excellent job in keeping the roads passable. I realize that crews worked many long hours to ensure that our roads were as clear and safe as possible. As Eastern Kentuckians try to return to their normal routines, many of you are still working those long shifts. Most of us take for granted the job that you do. However, I want you to know, that even when we do not say it, we are grateful for the salt trucks that run all hours of the day or night; the workers who keep the roads scraped free of snow and ice; and the crews who work diligently to keep trees and limbs off the roads and highways. You are unsung heroes, and I appreciate all that you do all the time, but especially the job you have performed during the inclement weather of the past weeks.

Thank you for making our lives easier and for doing an outstanding job.

If there is ever anything I can do to assist you, please do not hesitate to contact me, and again, thanks.

Sincerely,
Johnny Ray Turner
Johnny Ray Turner
Senate Democratic Caucus Chair

Kentucky Department of Highways
109 Loraine Street
Pikeville, Kentucky 41501

Dear Highway Department:

On behalf of the residents of Joe's Creek (Pike County), the Neighborhood Watch wants to thank you for your continued support. This winter has been trying on everyone. We want to thank you for your continued acceptance of the call to duty to get up out of your own warm home to prepare a safe roadway for us to travel. Many of us get out early to go to places of employment, and we either see the evidence of you being ahead of us or we meet you on the way.

Once again, please accept our gratitude for your support.

Sincerely,
Bob Kilgore, Herb Adams, Jeannie Adams, Clara Halsey, Ena Ray, Lester Ray, Lorrie A. Carter, Rafter Adams, Bill Gilliam, Hoyt Smith, Bennie Stratton, H. Carter, Matthew Kilgore.